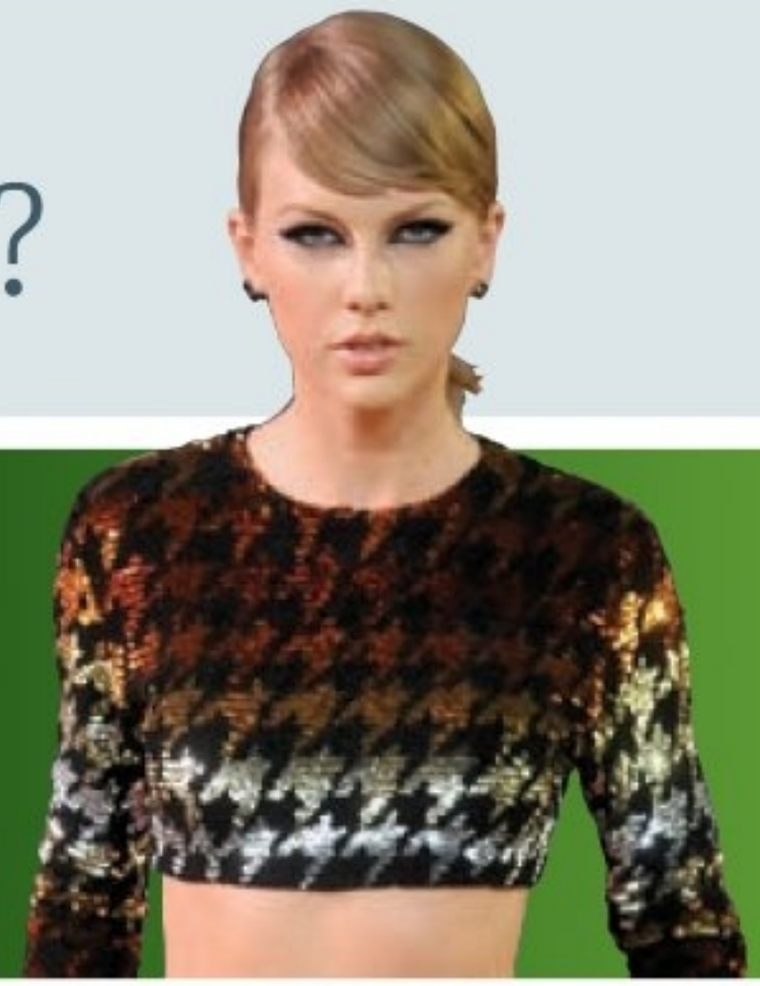
WAIT, SOMEONE SAID ‘NO’ TO TAYLOR SWIFT?

NOT EVERYONE IS SO EAGER TO JOIN T-SWIFT’S SQUAD. PAGE 16



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Wednesday, September 2, 2015 **www.metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly**

Philly style

Fashion. Philly Fashion Week is back for its 10th year and bigger than ever. Meet the Philly native who founded it 10 years ago to promote local fashion models and designers of color. PAGE 02

A model hits the runway at a Philly Fashion Week event. / FBH-THE AGENCY

Mortician charged with abuse of corpses

PAGE 04

Move over Statham, Ed Skrein is driving

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Fringe Fest shows for grownup eyes only

PAGES 20–21

Whose stock is up, whose is down in Eagles camp?

PAGE 27

Launching designers and models of color

Fashion. Kevin Parker had a vision for Philly Fashion Week when he was just 18. Ten years later, it's all coming true.

Runway couture and high-design lovers are celebrating 10 years of innovative fashion this week with the return of Philly Fashion Week.

Guests and designers from around the world will be able to see various Philly-themed fashion shows across the city. Geno's Steaks is even making room for a grand runway at their famed cheesesteak spot.

"It amazes me how far this has taken off," said Kevin Parker, 29, founder of Philly Fashion Week, which is running now through Sept. 4. "Philly has been so deserving of this spotlight and I'm happy to have kept believing in it each year."

Parker was 18 years old when he first conceived the idea to create a week that showcased the "best of Philly fashion." He is now part owner, with fashion guru Kerry Scott, of FBH-The Agency, which is the producing company of top fashion events in Philadelphia.

Even though New York Fashion Week has set the standard across America for fashion spectacles and showcases, Parker was determined to "give the city a chance to show its difference."

"All fashion weeks are different and should be that way — we're not trying to copy New York Fashion Week because the designers in Philly have their own style and taste to give the runway," Parker added.

Some of the notable distinctions at PFW are the increased diversity of the models, body types and designers who are featured each year. Parker said it is crucial to have such inclusion "because that reflects the city and world we should live in."

"Talent is talent. I'm proud to say that my team and I have given many of the designers/models of color a place to launch their careers within this extremely competitive fashion industry," Parker said.

In recent years Parker has finally attracted the huge corporate sponsors, such as Macy's and Ritz-Carlton, something he has always wanted to help make this event "something to gawk at."

"Some of the setbacks I initially had when starting this event were getting local and major sponsors to help endorse and support this … It took time, but the gradual build has made me more business savvy and invested in making this event soar," Parker said.

"This city is becoming a fashion force to be reckoned with," he said. "It's been 10 years, but we're finally ready to take the runway!"

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KEVIN PARKER, LEFT, FOUNDER OF PHILLY FASHION WEEK, AND PARTNER KERRY SCOTT

Style influencers

"Every year I come out and the event never ceases to inspire me," said local designer Ian Alexander, 23. Alexander, who has been doing PFW for the past three years, credits the event for giving him celebrity clients and global exposure.

- "My work has been featured in the recent Lil Mama music video and on "America's Next Top Model" … All this came from someone who saw my designs on that runway," Alexander said.
- If you go: See page 19 for the best fashion week events to attend.

Models wearing the latest styles at Philly Fashion Week
FBH-THE AGENCY

1 NEWS

Top 3

The best of Metro.us

1 Meet a seminarian: Why one New Yorker decided to leave secular life behind and become a priest

2 One year in, Brooklyn's Morbid Anatomy Museum still celebrates visitors' curiosity

3 PHOTOS: Philly Naked Bike Ride 2015 (NSFW)

On the go

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Funeral home director charged after decomposing bodies found

Philly. State regulators are cracking down on funeral homes after an uptick in 'decomposing bodies' cases.

A funeral home director was accused Tuesday of abusing three corpses after authorities found unrefrigerated, decomposed bodies and body parts in an unlicensed funeral home.

Blair Hawkins, 52, tried to keep state investigators out of the preparation room at Hawkins Funeral Services on 53rd and Vine streets on Monday afternoon, police say.

When they got in, they found two decomposed bodies and one body that was embalmed. They were in an "unventilated room," police say. Also found: an unmarked bag of human organs.

It was the second time in as many weeks that Philly cops found body parts — and bodies — in unlicensed funeral homes.

How does that happen?

It turns out that an obscure lawsuit over the regulation of funeral homes and a tough economic environment for funeral homes — at least in part — paved the way.

Back in 2012, a federal judge in Harrisburg declared that the state could not enforce many of the rules funeral homes followed.

"I've read the regulations in all 50 states," said Tanya Marsh, who teaches the nation's only law school class on funeral law at Wake Forest University School of Law, according to the university. "Pennsylvania is among

Blair Hawkins, inset, is charged with three counts of abuse of corpse for keeping unrefrigerated bodies at Hawkins Funeral Services in West Philly. / PROVIDED

the most restrictive."

A group of funeral home owners had sued Pennsylvania, arguing that its laws were antiquated and served, for the most part, to protect existing funeral home owners from outside competition.

For the next two years Pennsylvania could not inspect funeral homes without a search warrant, until October 2014, when a federal appeals court overturned that ruling.

The result: While regulators in Pennsylvania strive to inspect funeral homes every two years, they are still working through a small backlog stemming from the original court decision.

Police found three bodies in a garage outside Powell Funeral Home in Strawberry Mansion after neighbors reported a stench.

By Monday, the agency that regulates funeral homes had stepped up inspections in Philadelphia, leading them to Hawkins Funeral Services on the 5300 block of Vine Street. Investigators said they found the funeral was unlicensed and lacked refrigeration.

"Our investigators called the police," said Wanda Murren, a spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania Department of State, which regulates funeral homes.

In both cases where police found bodies, the owners of the homes had licenses to be funeral directors — but the facility was not licensed, Murren said.

Marsh, the law professor, said funeral home horror stories happen on a pretty regular basis, but they tend to be local news.

Why does it happen? Marsh says mental illness may play a role, but economic factors do too.

"Without saying this is a specific cause in these cases, this is an industry that is financially challenged," Marsh said.

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Woman used cancer charity for fraud: DA

Traci Small Kratzer / PROVIDED

Traci Small Kratzer was formally charged Tuesday with stealing more than $8,000 from an online charity fundraiser that was intended to go to the family of a local man fighting cancer.

Kratzer created a fundraiser on youcaring.com to benefit local man Jay Henson — but his wife later told police she never gave permission to Kratzer to set up the site.

The charity was linked to Kratzer's bank account and received more than 90 donations worth more than $10,000 total since May.

Bank records show all of the funds were gone by July, with much spent at stores such as Target, Toys R Us, McDonald's, Rite Aid and Sunoco, prosecutors say.

Kratzer had told the family she only received two checks worth $970 each and refused to give them access to the fundraising account, the DA said. METRO

SW Philly. Family says girlfriend killed vic, blamed robber

Quinton Graham / PROVIDED

The family of a man found stabbed to death in a Southwest Philly backyard last month says they still don't know what caused his girlfriend to allegedly take his life.

But a sister of 30-year-old Quinton Graham, of Kensington, who was found stabbed to death on Aug. 8, said 34-year-old Dionia James deserves the harshest possible punishment for the crime.

"I want her to do life. It was first-degree murder," said Angel Graham, Quinton's sister.

James waived her right to a preliminary hearing on first-degree murder charges Tuesday in the hopes that waiving the hearing might provide a "tactical advantage" to future negotiations for pleading to a reduced charge from the Philly DA's office, her attorney Samuel Stretton said, although nothing is guaranteed.

James, who wore a pink shirt in court, said little except to tell the judge that she agreed with her attorney's advice.

James is charged with stabbing Graham to death on Aug. 8 in a backyard in Grays Ferry near Oakford and 27th streets.

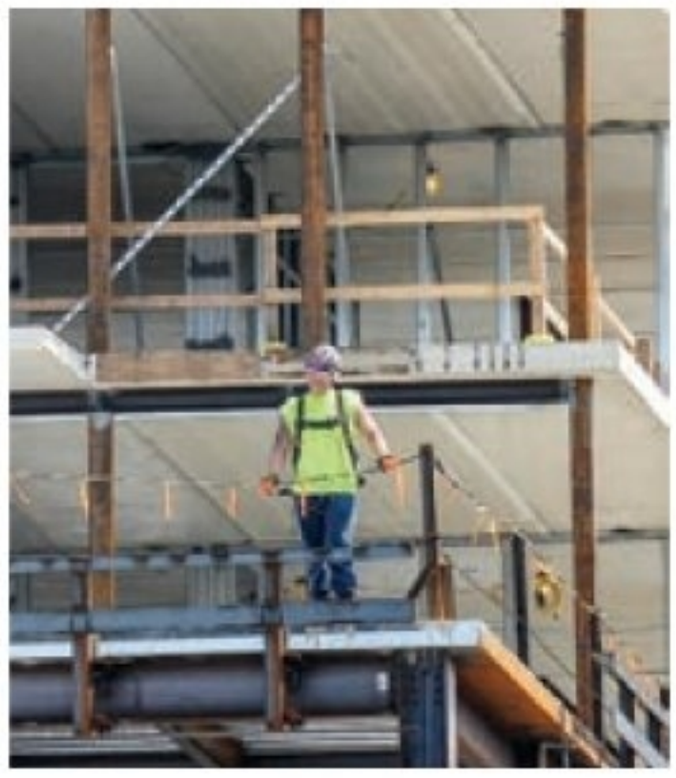
Graham's sister Chantee Graham said the killing took place in the backyard of James' husband's sister — and that afterwards, James called Chantee and Angel, telling them that Quinton was murdered during a robbery.

Instead, detectives arrested and charged James with the crime.

Chantee, Angel and their aunt Gwen Lewis credited the Philadelphia Police's detectives with quickly solving the murder, but said Graham's children, a son and daughter aged 13 and 10, respectively, are still grieving.

"You just have to pray," Angel said. "All these senseless killings [are] just sad. People have children, they have families. You're ripping them apart."

SAM NEWHOUSE



Philly on the build

Construction at 21st and Hamilton continues apace for a new planned residential and commercial space right behind the Rodin Museum. The Barton Partners project is replacing the Best Western hotel, which was torn down.

CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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Baseball

Phillies Ballgirls applications now open

Applications are now open for Phillies Ballgirls for the 2016 season, the Phillies announced Tuesday.

When the Ballgirls aren't on the field at Citizens Bank Park scooping up loose baseballs rolling down the baseline, they are making off-field appearances including school visits and leading the team's environmental initiatives.

They "represent educated, athletic and energetic women who hope to serve as role models in professional sports for young girls," according to the Phillies.

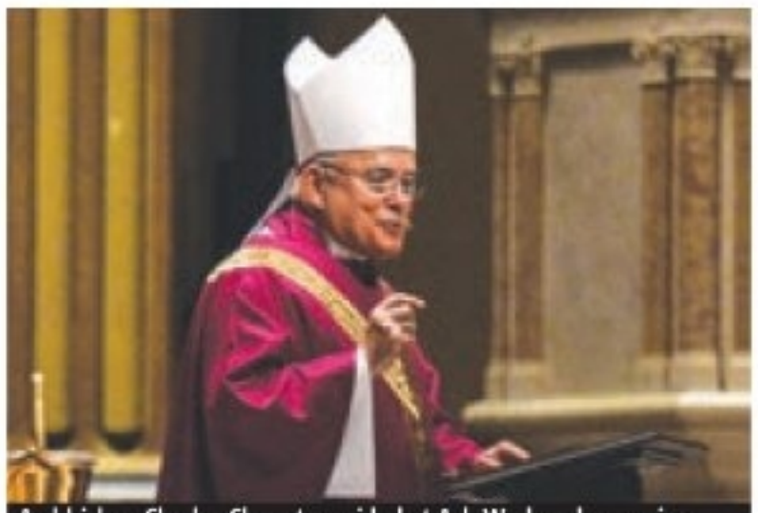
Applicants must be 18 or older and apply by Sept. 28.

For more information, visit phillies.com/ballgirls.

METRO

Archbishop says Catholics aren't locked in culture wars

Church. Philly Catholic leader disputes perception of rift with 'cool' Pope Francis.


Archbishop Charles Chaput presided at Ash Wednesday services earlier this year. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

It's the culture war story line: "cool" Pope Francis and his overarching concern for the poor versus dowdy conservative bishops focused on abortion and gay marriage.

Not so fast, Archbishop Charles Chaput said in a new column. If you want to know what the Catholic Church in Philadelphia cares about, look at how it spends its money.

Chaput said the church spends about $200,000 per year on what he calls "sanctity of life" issues and has just one full-time employee dedicated to pro-life work — with the rest handled by volunteers.

Quoted

"It's not a fact that fits comfortably into a story line of 'compassionate Pope Francis versus conservative American bishops.'"

Chaput

The archdiocese's social service agencies employ 1,600, spend $4.2 million that is donated to the church and manage another $100 million in public dollars serving the poor, the homeless, the disabled and battered women, Chaput said.

"It's not a fact that fits comfortably into a story line of 'compassionate Pope Francis versus conservative American bishops,'" Chaput wrote.

A March poll by the Pew Research Center found seven in ten U.S. Catholics see Francis' reign as a new direction for the church — and half of those see it as a change for the better.

Asked in June for his opinion on gay priests, Francis famously responded, "Who am I to judge?" On Tuesday, Francis announced that for the church's Holy Year, women who have had abortions would be able to be granted forgiveness by all priests.

"This action in no way diminishes the moral gravity of abortion," Chaput said Tuesday. "What it does do is make access to sacramental forgiveness easier for anyone who seeks it with a truly penitent heart."

Still, culture war issues continue to crop up amid the preparations for the Pope's visit. The archdiocese is embroiled in a controversy over the firing of Margie Winters, a lesbian teacher at Waldron Mercy Academy, who was married to a woman while working at the Catholic school.

"It's true that Philadelphia Catholics give generously to care for the poor," said Michael Sherrard of the progressive Christian group Faithful America, "but when it comes to politics their archbishop has shown more interest in partisan culture wars than in addressing the root causes of poverty and economic inequality."

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Anthony Horowitz calls Idris Elba too 'street' to be Bond

Social media. Fans of Idris Elba are taking to Facebook and Twitter to voice their outrage against the comment.

Idris Elba / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"For me, Idris Elba is a bit too rough to play the part. It's not a color issue. I think he is probably a bit too 'street' for Bond. Is it a question of being suave? Yeah."
Horowitz

Anthony Horowitz, the guy who's now in charge of writing James Bond fiction, has called black actor Idris Elba "a bit too street" to play 007.

Fans of Elba, the British actor who has played Shakespearean roles and won accolades for portraying Nelson Mandela, are besides themselves.

Horowitz is the social media public enemy of the day for his brow-raising comments in The Daily Mail.

"So Anthony Horowitz thinks Idris Elba is too 'street' to play Bond. I see your coded racism am calling it," tweeted @ephemeragrrl.

Horowitz picked apart Elba's qualifications to succeed actor Daniel Craig in the next movie. Elba is considered a front-runner for the role, and Bond fans are openly calling for him to get it.

"Idris Elba is a terrific actor, but I can think of other black actors who would do it better," said Horowitz, who cited Adrian Lester as one of them.

Horowitz's first Bond novel, "Trigger Mortis," is out this month. REUTERS

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Five things you need to know

1 Obama pushes for more U.S. ice-breaking might in Arctic

President Barack Obama proposed a faster timetable for buying a new heavy icebreaker for the U.S. Arctic, where quickly melting sea ice has spurred more maritime traffic and the United States has fallen far behind Russian resources.

The move, part of a push to convince Americans to support Obama's plans to curb climate change, has long been urged by Arctic advocates as climate change opens up the region to more shipping, mining and drilling.

The announcement came as Obama heads to the coastal town of Seward, named after Secretary of State William Seward, who negotiated the purchase of Alaska in 1867 from Russia.

In the first step of Obama's new timetable, the government would buy a heavy icebreaker by 2020 instead of the previous goal of 2022. The United States used to have seven icebreakers, but the fleet has dwindled to three creaky vessels, only one of which is a heavy-duty vessel, the White House said.

"Russia, on the other hand, has 40 icebreakers and another 11 planned or under construction," the White House said.

Obama will have to convince Congress to pick up the tab for any new icebreakers, each of which come with a price tag of about $1 billion. REUTERS

2 Pope to allow priests to forgive abortion in Holy Year

Pope Francis will give all priests discretion during the Roman Catholic Church's upcoming Holy Year to formally forgive women who have had abortions.

In Church teaching, abortion is such a grave sin that those who procure or perform it incur an automatic excommunication, which can only be lifted by designated church officials.

However, from Dec. 8 to Nov. 26, during an extraordinary Holy Year or "Jubilee" on the theme of mercy, all priests will be able to do so if the women repent "with a contrite heart," the pope said in a letter published by the Vatican. REUTERS

3 Clerk defies court, denies gay marriage licenses

A Kentucky county clerk, defying a new U.S. Supreme Court decision and citing "God's authority," rejected requests for marriage licenses from same-sex couples.

Citing her religious objections, Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis has refused to issue any marriage licenses since the Supreme Court in June ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry under the U.S. Constitution.

The court rejected Davis' request for an emergency order allowing her to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples while she appeals a federal judge's order requiring her to issue them. REUTERS

4 Six injured in building collapse at Rhode Island university: Officials

Six people were injured when a building collapsed on Tuesday at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, officials said.

The six are construction workers who were working on an athletic facility when it collapsed. Their injuries were not life-threatening, the city's fire department said on Twitter.

"We are cooperating fully with authorities," said Elizabeth O'Neil, an associate vice president at the school, who noted that no Bryant students or staff were nearby at the time of the collapse. REUTERS

5 Google redesigns iconic logo

Google unveiled a redesign of its iconic logo, the fifth such modification since the search engine started in 1998, the company said in a blog post.

The revamped logo, displayed as a Google Doodle on its home page, spells 'Google' in a sans-serif typeface, similar to the one being used by Google's newly created holding company, Alphabet.

The compact version of the logo, used to identify most of its apps, bids farewell to the little blue "g" icon and replaces it with a uppercase "G" colored in blue, red, yellow and green to match the full logo. REUTERS

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Police officers search an area for three suspects involved in shooting an officer in Fox Lake, Illinois. / GETTY IMAGES

Police in Illinois hunt for suspects in killing of veteran officer

Officer shot.
Police say three men are involved.

More than 100 police officers using aircraft and canine units were searching northern Illinois on Tuesday afternoon for three suspects believed to be involved in the fatal shooting of a 30-year veteran police officer, officials said.

Fox Lake Police Lieutenant Charles Joseph Gliniewicz was found wounded on Tuesday morning after reporting that he was pursuing three suspects on foot, the Lake County Sheriff's Office said. He later died.

Officials have only described the three suspects as two white males and one black male. None were in custody as of Tuesday evening, Lake County Sheriff's Office spokesman Christopher Covelli said.

The shooting came days after a county deputy sheriff in Texas was killed in a hail of gunfire while refueling a patrol car at a gas station.

A suspect in the Friday shooting was captured and has been charged with capital murder.

"Today, not only did Fox Lake lose a family member, I lost a very dear friend," Fox Lake Mayor Donny Schmit told a news conference.

Gliniewicz, a father of four boys and a decorated officer, was known around the village as "G.I. Joe" and dedicated to Fox Lake and his fellow officers, Schmit said.

Police with dogs and helicopters continued to search woods and swampy areas after three suspects fled the scene where Gliniewicz was shot.

On Tuesday evening, a group of officers formed a line and disappeared into dense trees and brush in a search for the suspects as bystanders watched across a busy road.

"I've lived here for 30 years and never had to lock my door until now," said Dan Christensen, 64, as a police helicopter circled above a nearby wooded area.

The suspects were on foot when the officer initially made contact with them, and they stole his firearm and other gear before fleeing, media reports said.

Covelli said local residents should remain indoors and report suspicious activity. REUTERS

Illinois

FAA establishes no-fly zone at area of manhunt

The Federal Aviation Administration established a no-fly zone over the search area.

The one-day temporary flight restriction is "to provide a safe environment for law enforcement activities" and covers a radius of 2 nautical miles from Fox Lake, the FAA said.

The FAA often sets such restrictions when there is a risk of collisions between news media helicopters and law enforcement helicopters. REUTERS

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Summer game. Los Angeles votes to pursue hosting 2024 Olympics

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, center, celebrates with Los Angeles City Councilmen Joe Buscaino, left, and Marqueece Harris-Dawson after the council voted to bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics, at City Hall in Los Angeles. / GETTY IMAGES

The Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously on Tuesday to pursue a bid to bring the Summer Games to town in 2024 and become the only city besides London ever to host the Olympics three times.

The resolution adopted by the council allows for the city to negotiate a financial agreement with Olympic officials once Los Angeles is officially proposed as the American host city for the games.

Mayor Eric Garcetti is solidly behind the campaign to host the 2024 Olympics, as is most of the city's business establishment, though some council members had raised concerns that Los Angeles could be on the hook for costs that exceed revenues.

Los Angeles has found itself the most talked-about U.S. candidate city for the 2024 Summer Olympics — Rio de Janeiro hosts next year and Tokyo in 2020 — after officials in Boston took the Massachusetts capital out of contention.

Boston's mayor said he did not want to expose municipal taxpayers to the potential tab for mammoth cost overruns the games have left other host cities.

Los Angeles represents a possibly thrifty choice, in large part because officials say most prospective event venues for the games already exist, including Memorial Coliseum.

The city and the coliseum previously played host to the Summer Games in 1932 and 1984. London in 2012 became the only metropolis to host the games three times. REUTERS

Old coliseum

101

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, which will be 101 years old in 2024.

Wicked weather

Fierce storm hits Phoenix, tens of thousands lose power

Tens of thousands of customers throughout the Phoenix area remained without electricity on Tuesday after a powerful storm knocked down power lines and halted flights at the city's international airport, authorities said.

Crews worked through the night and into the morning to restore service to customers from a thunderstorm that brought heavy rains, winds and lightning as it rumbled through metropolitan Phoenix on Monday night.

Utilities Salt River Project and Arizona Public Service Co. said more than 70,000 customers lost power at the peak of the latest storm to hit the area.

Authorities said there were no immediate reports of any injuries.

The storm halted take-offs and landings at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport for more than an hour beginning on Monday evening, said spokeswoman Heather Lissner.

Wind gusts

61 mph

A terminal roof at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport was damaged by wind gusts that reached 61 miles per hour, and shuttle trains were temporarily halted because of flooding.

More than an inch of rain was reported north and west of the airport, according to the National Weather Service in Phoenix. Localized street flooding was seen throughout the area. REUTERS

Wall Street.
Young workers took the hardest hit in last month's stock market drop. Here's why.

Why the stock market drop hit millennials the hardest

A young stockbroker watches as the Dow Jones Index dropped sharply two weeks ago. / GETTY IMAGES

As the stock market has whipsawed over the past two weeks, young workers who have all their retirement funds tied up in long-range target-date funds may have been the hardest hit.

The average 25-year-old fully invested in a 2060 target-date fund series, or TDF, saw a 10 percent decline in account value from the market's recent peak on July 17 through Monday's close, according to Morningstar, which is close to the 10.96 percent decline of the S&P 500 over that period. Meanwhile, the average 65-year-old set to retire this year and invested in a 2015 TDF series saw just a 5 percent decline.

Is the worst over?

Even if stocks continue to rebound in the days ahead, the experience of watching value shrink may be an eye-opener to new investors who might not have thought about their risk tolerance before.

Target-date funds are designed to adjust an investor's risk as retirement age approaches, through what is called a glide path. The farther out the fund's end date, the higher the stock allocation. Investors in 2060 funds have equity exposure ranging from 83 percent to 94 percent, says Janet Yang, director of multi-asset-class manager research at Morningstar. In the 2015 funds, aimed at workers who will be retiring very soon, average equity exposure is just 42 percent.

Affecting the future

The popularity of these funds in retirement plans is surging. Vanguard reports that 88 percent of the 401(k) plans it serves offered TDFs last year, up 17 percent from 2009. Four out of 10 plan participants are wholly invested in a single TDF, Vanguard says, and 64 percent of participants use them to some extent.

Many young workers are now automatically enrolled in 401(k) plans and put into a default allocation that typically is a target-date fund. On the plus side, especially for young and inexperienced investors, these funds seem to have handcuffed the worst investor behaviors, like frequent trading. Asset-weighted average investor returns in TDFs are 1.1 percentage points higher than the funds' average total returns, according to a Morningstar study published earlier this year.

More options

Default investor options for 401(k) plans are not limited to target date funds. The Labor Department allows balanced funds and managed funds, which give workers professional one-on-one portfolio guidance.

Managed accounts also give workers a human being to talk with when things get scary — but just 3 percent of plan sponsors pick managed account services as a default option, according to a Towers Watson survey.

"When the market gets volatile, you don't have someone to talk to if you're in a TDF," says Wei-Yin Hu, vice president of financial research at Financial Engines, one of the leading firms providing managed account services. "You can't call your TDF and ask if your allocation is still right for you, or what you should do now that you've lost 10 percent in a downturn."

Michael Kitces, founder of the XY Planning Network, a network of fee-only advisers specializing in serving Gen X and Gen Y clients, urges target-date investors to assess their comfort with risk by taking a well-designed risk questionnaire such as the one offered for $45 by Finametrica. If you are not comfortable with the level of risk in your TDF, consider shifting to a closer-date target series with less equity exposure.

"It's not too late for young people to dial down their exposure to a level they can tolerate," he says. "Make a change when things are down 10 percent instead of 40 percent. Things can get worse, and then you'll make really nonrational, emotional decisions."

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2 CULTURE

Twitter feed

Today, Lorde seems a little excited, Azealia Banks has new career goals, Tom Arnold needs help, Lena Dunham may steal this for "Girls" and Bob Saget is making up quotes.

@lordemusic: PYROMANIAC

@AZEALIABANKS: Low key wanna be a casting director

@TomArnold: If you already know the answer ("tired and nauseous") do you still have to ask your pregnant wife how she feels? Asking for a friend.

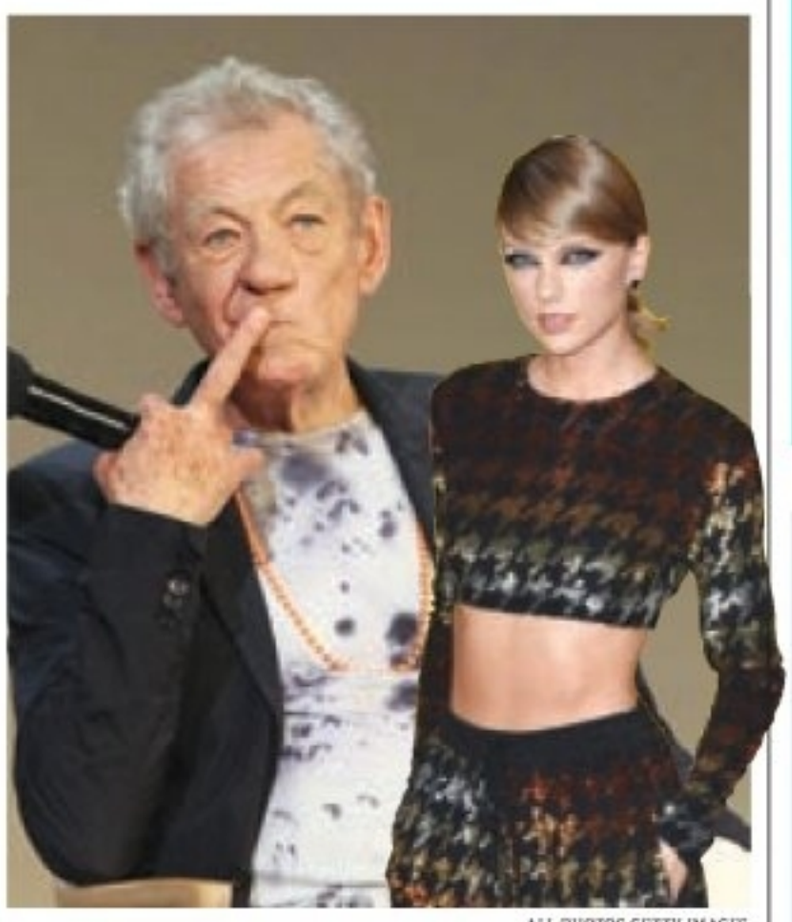
@lenadunham: Cool diss: "Like I'd waste my one clean pair of underwear on THIS!"

@bobsaget: Women. They are a complete mystery. ~ Stephen Hawking

1 About that time Taylor Swift had Ian McKellen evicted

While Ian McKellen's BFF, Patrick Stewart, might have been thrilled at the prospect of joining the ever-ballooning ranks of Taylor Swift's squad, McKellen himself is in no rush. In fact, he even turned down Swift's invitation to make a cameo at one of her recent L.A. gigs. Saying no to Swift? Apparently, it's possible.

So why did the "X-Men" and "Lord of the Rings" star decline the offer? It turns out the two have a bit of a history. "When I was living in Peter Jackson's apartment in New York, Taylor Swift bought it while I was there and I was thrown out before I wanted to leave. That hardly puts me in Taylor Swift's team, does it?" McKellen reveals to Gay Star News. "She bought it, she had every right to. I was just lodging there for free. She did ask me to appear with Patrick Stewart at her show in L.A., but I had something else to do that night." That is some impressive shade, sir.



ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

3 Lauren Conrad OK with being basic now

Good news, everyone. Former "The Hills" star Lauren Conrad has come to terms with her basicness. Last year, Allure dubbed her as such, prompting Conrad to chafe at the signifier on Twitter. Apparently, she's reconsidered. "I'm probably pretty basic," she tells Cosmo in the magazine's cover story on her. "But I'm also a pretty happy person, so that's OK with me." Well, good. None of this, however, answers the question of why Conrad is getting a Cosmo cover to begin with, but some of life's mysteries will never be solved, I suppose.

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

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Daily video

If Harry Potter were the Villain

Who doesn't love a good trailer re-cut? In the spirit of that classic that turns "The Shining" into a lighthearted comedy, we give you "Harry Potter: The Boy Who Kills." It turns out there's plenty of ammunition to reframe J.K. Rowling's series in a way that suggests young Harry is the real bad guy — and a supercreepy one, at that. It's all in how you look at things, right?

BLOODBLITZ COMEDY, YOUTUBE

2 Andrew Garfield on Spider-Man: 'Like a prison'

Andrew Garfield has had a lot of time to think about his time playing Spider-Man for two films before Sony's recent decision to once again reboot the franchise, and his thoughts have not been pleasant. "[The films are] mass-marketed. Like, 'We want 50-year-old white men to love it, gay teenagers to love it, bigot homophobes in Middle America to love it, 11-year-old girls to love it.' That's canning Coke. So that was a bummer," Garfield tells the Playlist. "I understand people want to make a lot of money, and they're going to spend a lot of money so the playpen can be as big as it was. I can't live that way. It sounds like a prison, to be honest, living within those expectations." Yikes.

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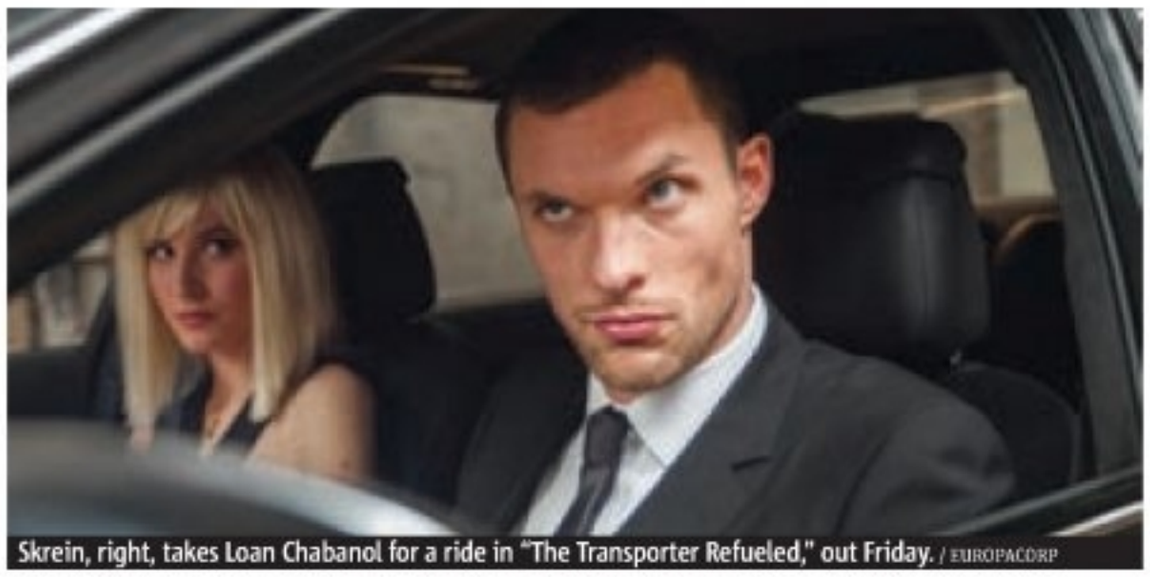
Meet the new Transporter

Film. "The Transporter Refueled" star Ed Skrein teaches us about Resting Sociopath Face.


Skrein, right, takes Loan Chabanol for a ride in "The Transporter Refueled," out Friday. / EUROPACORP

Ed Skrein swears he's a nice guy, despite appearances. The British actor and rapper steps in for Jason Statham in "The Transporter Refueled," the fourth film in the fast-driving franchise, and while he keeps getting gigs filled with violence and mayhem, Skrein insists he's a teddy bear at heart.

Did you watch the previous films to prepare?
I did. I'd never seen them before, and it was so important for me to watch them, to know what the fans expected and what had come previously. I think it would be ignorant of me to have not familiarized myself.

You're also in the darkly comic "Kill Your Friends."
Quintessentially dark, British humor. I would've cleaned the toilets on set, I was so excited to be a part of it. It's a different role for me. A lot of the stuff that I've done has been pretty heavy, pretty dark. People tend to gravitate towards me when they want dark stuff. I can't think why. Even when I do comedy, I do it dark, like "Deadpool."

Why do you think people think of you for these darker roles?
I think my bone structure suggests that I am a violent person. Even when I do a neutral face I look like I'm going to stab you in the eye. [Laughs] But in real life I'm a teddy bear. Darkness is something that I enjoy exploring in cinema because I don't have darkness in my life. Maybe this craft is my therapy. I get to kill people and beat people up and be immensely horrible and evil on camera and live my days nine to five as a sociopath, and then I go home and I've got it out of my system.

That sounds very healthy, actually.
You should try it.

NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick
ned.ehrbar@metro.us

One more thing

When you're stepping into a franchise role like this, what sort of hesitations or trepidations go along with that?

SKREIN
GETTY IMAGES

That doesn't play into it for me. It isn't really a factor, you know? And when taking on a role like this, I have the same preparation I would have normally taking on a small European independent movie with a character that's never been played by anyone else. You find the character, you find the wiring and you work out how they make decisions. You sort of find their shoes and get comfortable in them.

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ON THE SEXIST 'STAR WARS' ARMOR COMMENT

Here's a picture of Captain Phasma from "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." Pop quiz: Is it a he or a she? Or is it a trick question and the gender doesn't matter because, you know, it's armor? / LUCASFILM

Geek Girl in Hollywood

JENNA BUSCH

JENNA BUSCH TAKES ON THE WAY POP CULTURE SNUBS ITS FEMALE FANS. FOR MORE COLUMNS, VISIT METRO.US/JENNA-BUSCH AS WELL AS HER SITE, LEGION OF LEIA (WWW.LEGIONOFLEIA.COM)

Let's talk about boob armor. You know, the suits of armor that have clearly defined spaces for breasts. Why? This past week, the official "Star Wars" Facebook page posted a picture of some really cool Captain Phasma fan art, saying, "Feeling inspired by Phasma? Your 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'-inspired art could land you a spot in a professional art exhibit, among other prizes." As you may or may not know, Captain Phasma is the chrome Stormtrooper played by "Game of Thrones" star Gwendoline Christie.

One of the comments on the pic, which has since been deleted, said, "Not to be sexist, but it's really hard to tell that's female armor for me." The official account replied, "It's armor. On a woman. It doesn't have to look feminine." (I can almost hear thousands of women yelling "Thank you!" over the Internet.)

First of all, starting a sentence with "Not to be sexist, but" pretty much guarantees someone is going to be pissed at whatever you're about to say. Second, it's not the job of armor to indicate sex. It's there to protect you. Why does it matter that you can tell if Captain Phasma is a woman? Does not having an indication of breasts affect her character? Is she less female because some guy on Facebook can't tell right away? Last time I checked I was female, whether I was wearing a parka or a bikini.

The other thing is boob armor would likely injure you terribly or kill you in some horrific way. In simple terms, you would likely not see a suggestion of breasts after all the padding was put on you. If you decided to use them for aesthetics, molded cups would be like a knife in the chest if you fell forward or were hit in the chest.

There are plenty of places a film, game or TV show can indicate gender. There are plenty of reasons and places for things like bikini tops, and none of them are fighting in a desert like Quiet in "Metal Gear Solid." Princess Leia's outfit in Jabba's palace made sense in the story and the setting. Making sure some guy on the Internet was absolutely sure Captain Phasma is a woman because of curvy lines in a costume that is military and meant to protect is just ridiculous. Thank you, "Star Wars" social media person, for having had enough of this stuff as well.

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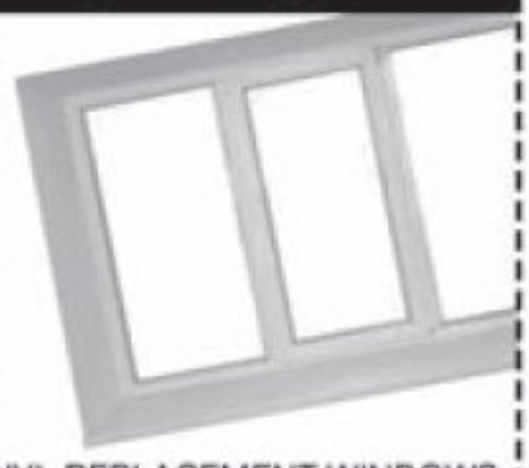

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On Thursday at 5 p.m., Macy's in Center City (1300 Market St.) is hosting the Icon Award presentation, honoring New York Fashion Week creator Fern Mallis, who will be on hand signing her book, "Fashion Lives: Fashion Icons with Fern Mallis." This one is free, but RSVP at www.phillyfashionweek.org.

Find out what's hot for fall at Philly Fashion Week.

PROVIDED

From Macy's, get yourself to the Crane Arts Building (1400 N. American St.) for the Ready-to-Wear fashion show at 7 p.m. Tickets are $40, or live like a celeb and splurge on a front-row VIP ticket for $80.

Crane Arts is the place to be on Friday evening, too: The Couture fashion show kicks off at 7 p.m.

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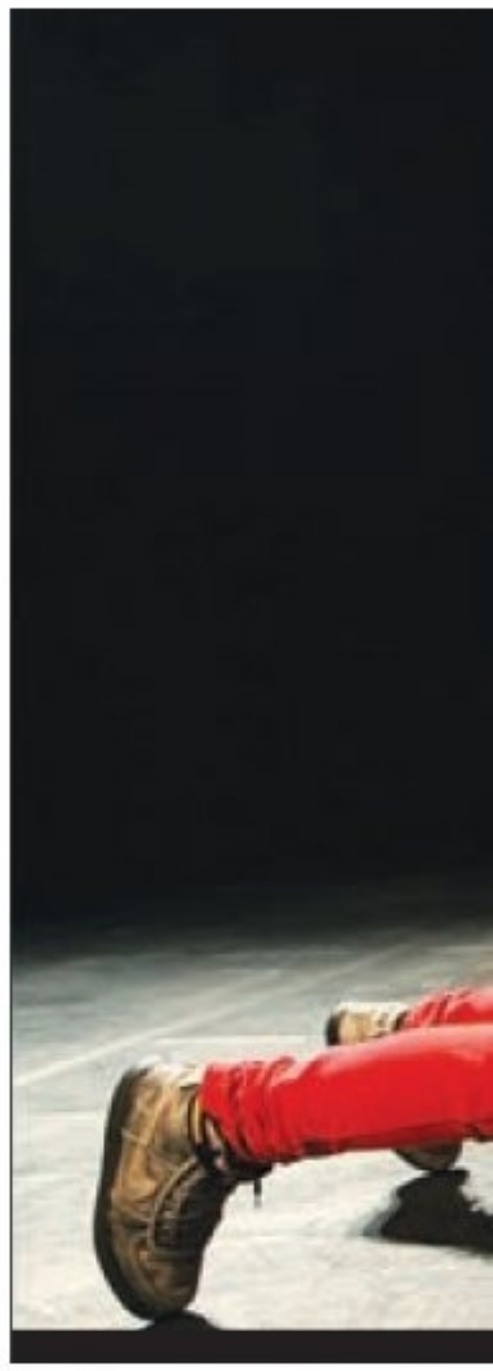
NSFW shows to see at the Fringe Festival



Rated R. Sex, gore and full-frontal nudity put these Fringe performances in the adults-only category.

Philadelphia's 19th annual Fringe Festival has edgy satires, salon-style spoken word performances, site-specific dance shows, true tales told through shadow puppets and even a conceptual artist who will wash your dirty dishes. And then, of course, there's the sex, nudity and midnight haunted houses.

The fest kicks off tomorrow and runs through Sept. 19. Here are five adults-only performances you should definitely not bring your kids (or parents) to see.

'Rude Beach'

Sept. 3 and 4, 8 p.m.
The Iron Factory
118 Fountain St.
$10-$15

Dancers and choreographers Shannon + Katrina are stripping down for "Rude Beach," which they describe as "equal parts adventure and love song" in a "lovely and lovable dance" inspired by childhood memories of playing on the sand. The show is a collaboration between Shannon Renninger, Katrina Atkin and five other dancers.

'Spookfish'

Sept. 4-13, start times vary
Headlong Studios
1170 S. Broad St.
$10-$15

There's nothing neighborly about this Neighborhood Fringe show centered on slasher flicks, fireworks accidents and high school horrors, set in a haunted dilapidated warehouse. Local playwright Haygen Brice Walker and director Jessica Schwartz promise "Spookfish" is super creepy — and bloody — until the very end. And just in case you don't believe them, they make you sign a waiver before you can watch it.

'Still Standing You'

Sept. 9, 10 and 11, 7 p.m.
Painted Bride
230 Vine St
$15-$29

This unflinching piece of physical theater is part of the Curated lineup: 12 shows from both around the world and right here in Philly handpicked by FringeArts for the festival. Created and performed by Pieter Ampe, from Belgium, and Guilherme Garrido, from Portugal, both are part of the CAMPO art center in Belgium. "Still Standing You" is described as an intimate, surprising, tension-filled (but hilarious) look at the friendship between two men — with full-frontal nudity.

Reality TV

'Slaughter/ette'

Sept. 3, 4 and 5, 7:30 p.m.
Mascher Space Cooperative
155 Cecil B. Moore Ave.
Free

This dark comedy was inspired by the way woman are portrayed in reality TV — which is a pretty dark world in itself. A spin on "The Bachelor," "Slaughter/ette" gives the manufactured drama between walking stereotypes a gruesome twist by setting it in a slaughterhouse.

KATIE DURR

The free performance is by Butter & Serve, made up of four graduates of the Pig Iron School for Advanced Performance Training: Alicia Crosby, Vanita Kalra, Riva Rubenoff and Sara Vanasse.

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"Still Standing You" is one of the FringeArts Curated shows at the festival. / PHILE DEPREZ

'Puppetdelphia Fringe Slam'

Sept. 11, 10:30 p.m.
Plays and Players Theatre
1714 Delancey Place
$10

Remember the funny shock of the puppets going from a romantic kiss to full-on sex in "Team America"? (And let's not even talk about that scene in the uncut, not-for-theaters version). Relive the magic with the Puppetdelphia Fringe Slam from Leila and Pantea Productions. Both puppets and humans will get "risky and frisky" in this variety show featuring a series of R-rated short acts, music and more.

Watch puppets get raunchy. / PROVIDED

RACHEL VIGODA
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Aries Everyone around you will have trouble keeping up with you. You will be the center of attention no matter where you go or what you do.

Taurus Remember to be tactful when dealing with others. You are bound to ruffle some feathers if you don't choose your words wisely.

Gemini Widen your circle of friends and associates. Getting involved in a progressive group will lead to lifelong friendships that offer opportunities.

Cancer You will be tempted to intrude on someone else's business or personal affairs. Stand back and let others do as they please.

Leo Revitalize your mind by beginning a new course. Satisfy your thirst for knowledge by choosing a subject close to your heart.

Virgo A look at your assets will lead to an investment opportunity. Act quickly once the facts indicate a favorable venture. Host a party.

Libra Romance and passion will be front and center, making this an ideal day to look for love or to nurture an existing relationship.

Scorpio Mixing business with pleasure will not work in your favor. Thrust yourself into the forefront at the workplace and gain recognition.

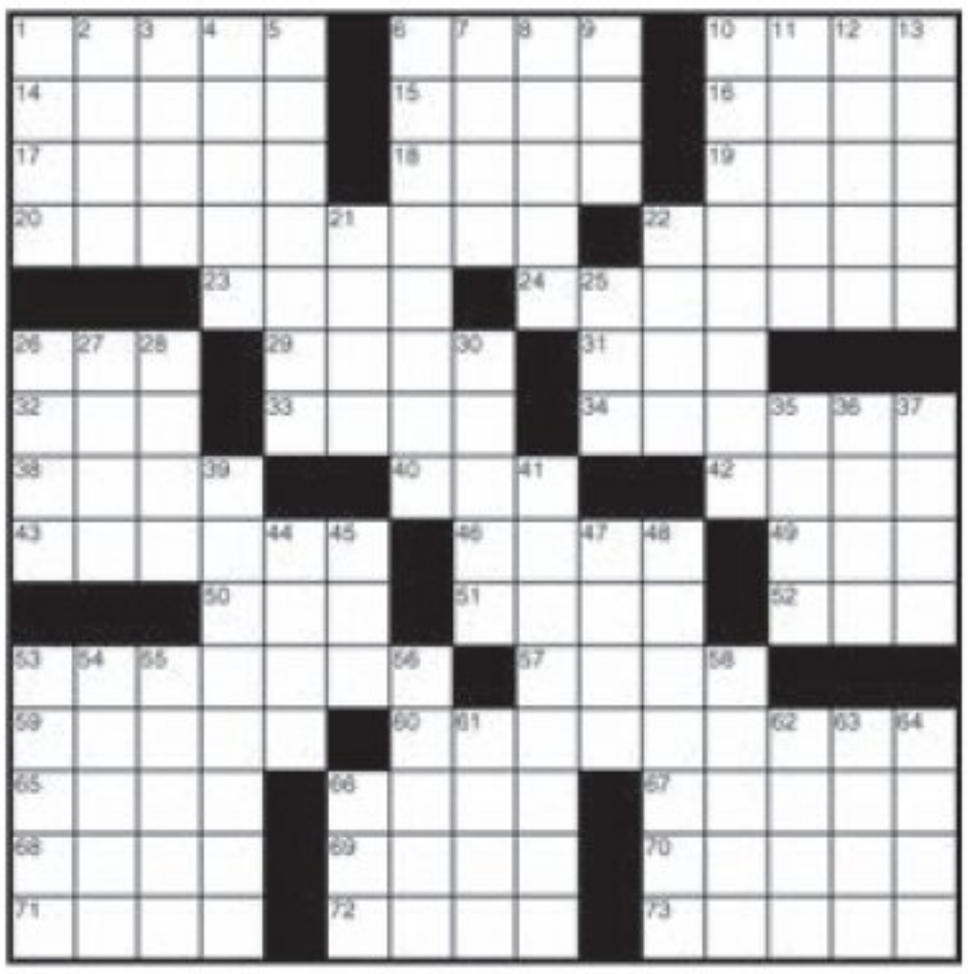
Sagittarius Your creative talent will shine through and draw a crowd. Attend events, and your contributions will be welcomed.

Capricorn Keep your emotions out of the equation. The current change unfolding in your life will turn out better than anticipated.

Aquarius Don't let upsetting personal issues get you down. If you open up and share your experiences, you will receive support from a friend.

Pisces Raising your income should be on your mind. You must remain realistic. Efficient planning will help reduce expenditures. **EUGENIA LAST**

metro.us/crossword



Across

1 Horizon, maybe
6 Pedro's coin
10 NYC art center
14 It quakes in the Rockies
15 Roman or Buzzi
16 Gen. — Halftrack
17 Intended
18 Pupil's place
19 Hung on to
20 Bright orange fruit
22 Alpine peak
23 Aquarius' tote
24 Violent weather
26 Wimple sporter
29 All excited
31 Fashion accessory
32 Ending for depart
33 Reckless
34 Meager
38 Pack down
40 Immeasurable time
42 Poi base
43 Bad posture
46 Recipe direction
49 Holiday cheer
50 Elegant accessory
51 Ski lift (hyph.)
52 Roman teenager's age
53 Clears, as a drain
57 Favoritism
59 Like a pitcher's dream game (hyph.)
60 Future frogs
65 Paris cop
66 Horrid-tasting
67 Lint collector
68 Long-active volcano
69 Cato's road
70 "Maria —"
71 Faculty honcho
72 Monster's loch
73 Avoid expiration

Down

1 Mae West persona
2 Um-hmm (2 wds.)
3 Bandy words
4 Rigid
5 Kind of protest
6 Pale yellow
7 Drachma's successor
8 Be frugal
9 Sighs of distress
10 Achieving success (2 wds.)
11 Sweater letter
12 Had the blues
13 Starry prefix
21 Part of MHz
22 Viking name
25 Tattoo parlor sounds
26 Squirrel staples
27 Europe-Asia range
28 "Nautilus" skipper
30 Spook
35 Tailless cat
36 B.C. or Que.
37 Jellystone bear
39 Tax collector
41 Fish, maybe
44 Ducklike bird
45 Beldam
47 Go kaput
48 Fitness guru
53 Famished
54 "48 Hrs." lead
55 Dishes
56 Ill will
58 Marshy tract
61 Flamenco shouts
62 Hot place
63 Kind of pool
64 Popular side dish
66 Yves' wine

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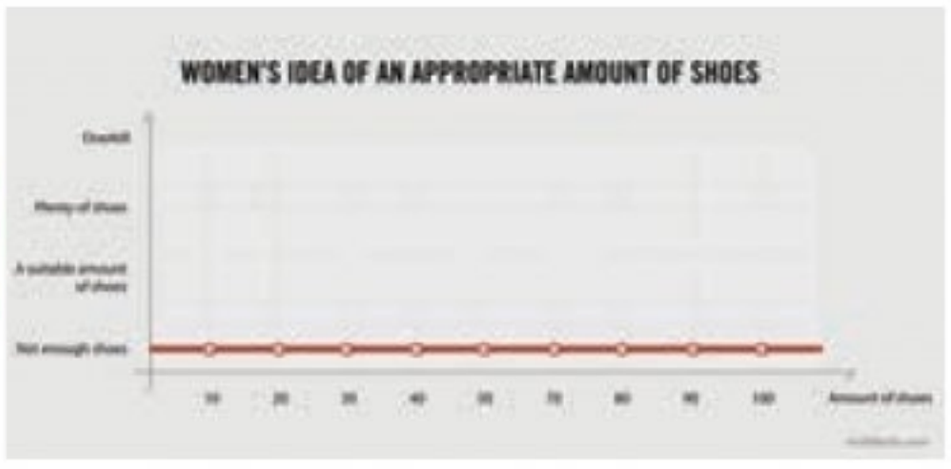

BY WULFF & MORGENTHALER

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easy

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				3		5	1	
	1	8					7	
	2	4	3	7				9
		5		4		3		
3				9	2	7	6	
	5					6	4	
	7	2		5				
	4		7	1				

hard

7	6	3	9	5				
	4		6					5
1	8					6	9	
					2			9
	2			3			7	
8			1					
	9	1					3	2
6					5		1	
				1	3	9	4	6

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home

Six easy ways to upgrade your rental

ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

With DIY renovation ideas from Reham Fagiri, co-founder of AptDeco, you create a space that's all your own — even if you don't actually own it.

RACHEL KASHDAN
@ MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Just because your lease says you can't paint those white walls doesn't mean you can't upgrade the place. Don't let your rental agreement cramp your style. Reham Fagiri, co-founder of pre-owned furniture marketplace AptDeco, fills us in on all the tricks to freshen up a lived-in space without breaking the rules.

Deck out your windows

Even if you've got trendy new furniture, stunning wall art and awesome accessories, sticking with the plastic slat blinds or worn white roller shades isn't going to give you the homey feel you're going for.

Instead, Fagiri suggests replacing generic blinds with colorful ones that complement your style or, alternatively, give curtains a try.

"Curtains are a great way to add coziness without spending a lot of money," she says. "You can just go to any drape store and it's less than $30 or $40 to buy brand new curtains." Her suggestion: "Long, lighter colored, white or beige flowy curtains really make a difference."

Swap out the hardware

Changing the knobs on plain, generic cabinets and drawers is one small modification that goes a long way in adding personality to your apartment.

"You can go to any hardware store and get new knobs that add a pop of color or even shine depending on your style," Fagiri says.

The expert says it only takes a couple minutes to unscrew and replace them, and it's easy to put the original knobs back on when it's time to move out.

Liven up your walls

Even if your landlord says painting your walls is a no-go, that doesn't mean you're stuck with bare white. One of Fagiri's favorite ways to spruce up walls is by hanging a cluster of framed artwork to create a focal wall.

Fagiri says that when arranging different-sized pictures on a wall, ori-

Amp up the lighting

The common denominator in almost all rental apartments is bad overhead lighting.

"The overhead lights are so strong that they're just not inviting," says Fagiri.

She recommends swapping out the basic flush mount light for attractive fixtures such as a chandelier or pendant light to "really bring a room together."

Another tip: Use standing or table lamps as your main light source instead. Fagiri says the light emitted from these is generally much more pleasing, plus they can be a great way to add some extra flair to your space.

Want even more control over the lighting in your apartment? Add a dimmer. "You can go to any hardware store and [buy one for] $5. Just adding that small accessory can dramatically change how the room looks," she says.

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Make your radiator vanish

Nothing kills a well-designed room quite like a nasty old radiator with chipping paint, but Fagiri says it's easy to make your radiator disappear.

"There are actually places you can go to find radiator covers. Some of them are plain so it just sort of blends in with the wall, and some of them have designs on them," she says.

Radiator covers, which you can easily find at a hardware store, are safe and simply slide right on over the radiator.

Fagiri says you can also try sprucing up your radiator by giving it a fresh coat of radiator-safe paint, though you should check with your landlord first before painting.

ent some horizontally and some vertically to add variety. "I love it when there's just different shapes and sizes," she says. "It just creates that illusion that it's sort of an art piece, whereas if everything is just one size it looks very organized."

She also adds that this works best if each frame is the same color so that the look stays cohesive.

The best part is that unlike spending money to paint walls, "these are things that you can take with you to your next apartment, which is great for budget saving," Fagiri says.

Don't always go for the cheap option

For furniture that you'll be using every day, Fagiri says you're better off investing in quality even if that means buying something secondhand.

"If you buy really cheap furniture that's flimsy you're going to spend, let's say, a couple hundred dollars. But you won't be able to move it because it'll break down," she explains. "If you spend a little bit more, or spend the same as you'd pay for a cheap piece of furniture [on something of quality] that's secondhand, you'll be able to take it anywhere and onto your next apartment."

There are certainly items where quality can be sacrificed, but Fagiri recommends investing in a nice bed, couch and dresser.

New apartment building Bridge is rising next to the bridge.

Will Bridge make Old City cool again?

MADELINE PRESLAND
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

After sitting empty for more than a decade, the lot at Second and Race streets in Old City is finally seeing some action. Bridge, a sleek 17-story residential high-rise from Brown Hill Development, is designed to be ecofriendly and — unusual for a property like this — includes affordable housing units.

Brown Hill bought the property way back in 2001. "We went through a round of attempts to build — there was opposition from the Old City Civic Association, and then the recession," says the development company president, Jeff Brown.

Job Itzkowitz, executive director of Old City District, which replaced the Civic Association, didn't comment on the opposition, but did say more people moving into the neighborhood could be a good thing. "Our research is not yet complete, [but] early findings suggest that residents and business owners alike would like to see more people in Old City," he says.

Bridge will have 147 units, plus commercial space. Half of the units will be one-bedrooms; the rest are split between studios and two-bedrooms. Rent will be roughly from $1,900 to $3,500.

The 15 affordable housing units will run about half the rent of comparable units. "I believe it's the first high-rise apartment building in the city that incorporates an affordable component," says Brown. "[Those units] will have the same treatments as all the other apartments."

Bridge is going up at 205 Race St. VOLLEY STUDIO

Amenities include a fitness center, co-working spaces (very trendy right now) and an outdoor space on the fifth floor with a barbecue area, hammocks and spots to hunker down with your computer and colleagues.

"The way people work these days is changing dramatically," Brown says. "People want to conduct business from their apartments. We want to focus on [amenities] that will get used."

Sustainable measures

Bridge is aiming for LEED Gold certification, bestowed by the U.S. Green Building Council based on environmentally friendly aspects of a building. The Gold rating applies when a development scores 60-79 points out of a possible 110.

"We want to give back to the city," says Brown. "We're all living together, and why not?"

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3 SPORTS

Last-minute cut

Eagles get down to 75

Needing to get their roster to 75 men by 4 p.m. Tuesday, the Eagles released Villanova alum Kevin Monangai as the final cut prior to the Jets game. The Eagles must reduce their roster to 53 by Saturday at 4 p.m.

Eagles inside linebackers are slowly getting healthy

NFL. Kiko Alonso, DeMeco Ryans and Mychal Kendricks have yet to suit up in the same game together.

On paper, the Eagles inside linebacking trio of veteran leader DeMeco Ryans and young studs Mychal Kendricks and Kiko Alonso looks like a force to be reckoned with.

And on the practice field at the NovaCare Complex in South Philly, the three have been proving that when healthy they can be everywhere on the field. But that's when they're all healthy.

All three suffered injuries in 2014, with Kendricks' setback coming early in the campaign but Ryans and Alonso each missing significant time with ACL tears.

Kendricks, left, will sit, but Alonso expects to play Thursday. / GETTY IMAGES

None of the four Eagles preseason games will see the three play in the same game (though Ryans and Kendricks did get time together Saturday). Should Eagles fans be concerned?

"I don't think it will be a problem," Kendricks said. "We are all professionals, we practice and we all have the same responsibility. It won't be any different than me and DeMeco in there."

Among the many things in common to these three talented but also recovering athletes is their value to the Eagles. Ryans and Kendricks have new contracts while Alonso was acquired for the Eagles' all-time rushing leader LeSean McCoy. And all three will need to be healthy and productive for the Birds' defense to be better than last year.

"We were in there, being reintroduced to the game," Kendricks said. "I expected to go in there and try my best, learn some things. I made a couple plays, missed a couple plays. I learned and watched the tape, and will get ready for next week."

"It was good to be back out there," Ryans said. "It was just okay, not my best outing, but it's something to start from and something to improve on."

Both Kendricks and Ryans expect to sit against the Jets Thursday but Alonso says, "It'll be a nice little tune-up for me," predicting a handful of snaps.

The squad hopes to be at full strength on Sept. 14 when the Falcons kick off the regular season.

"You can only control what you can control," Kendricks said. "Injuries and setbacks — those are things you have to bounce back from and we are doing a good job of that."

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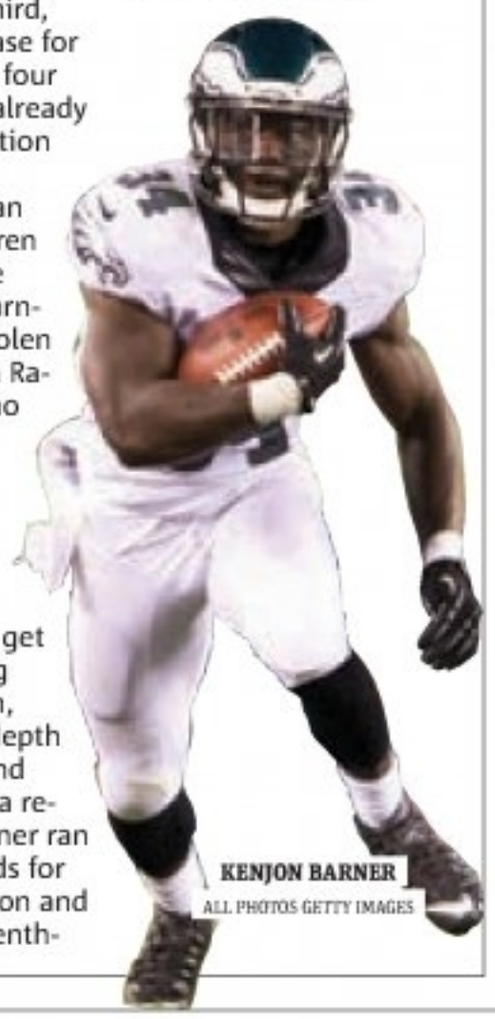
Whose stock is up, whose is falling at Eagles camp?

The Eagles roster is starting to take shape, and a few impact players have either proven their worth or come up short of expectations through the first three preseason games. **LUKE MILLER**

Kenjon Barner, running back

Barner has taken Philadelphia by storm this preseason. With a punt-return touchdown in each of the first two games and a 50-yard reception in the third, he's making the case for the Eagles to take four running backs — already their deepest position group with DeMarco Murray, Ryan Mathews and Darren Sproles — into the regular season. Barner's success has stolen the spotlight from Raheem Mostert, who would be making his own case for a roster spot if not for Barner.

It might not be clear to see where Barner will get on the field during the regular season, given the team's depth at running back and Sproles' ability as a return man, but Barner ran for over 3,000 yards for Chip Kelly at Oregon and Kelly traded a seventh-round pick to bring him to Philadelphia last season. This isn't a player Chip wants to see signed off his practice squad to another organization, and Barner's play this preseason has all but assured that will happen if the Eagles let it.



KENJON BARNER

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Trey Burton, tight end

Burton, who didn't catch a pass as a rookie in 2014, has been taking full advantage of Zack Ertz's time away from the lineup. He has seven catches so far through a strong preseason that culminated in two touchdowns that helped spark the Eagles' victory over the Packers Saturday.

Andrew Gardner, guard

The offensive line appears to be set, and it's set with Andrew Gardner at right guard for the Eagles. The biggest question entering the preseason was who would fill the second guard spot after the team cut Evan Mathis and Todd Herremans this offseason.

Gardner has started all three preseason games so far.

Eric Rowe will likely get many reps at nickle this season.

Eric Rowe, defensive back

While it may have seemed like just a matter of time before Rowe surpassed Nolan Carroll for the cornerback spot opposite Byron Maxwell, that hasn't happened. Rowe has shown flashes, and a knack for punching the ball out once it's caught. But he's also struggled consistently in coverage and was routinely targeted by Brett Hundley Saturday. Let's not think about how it would have looked if Aaron Rodgers was in the game.

With the departure of Brandon Boykin and injury to JaCorey Shepherd, Rowe's best chance may now come winning the battle at nickel corner against the likes of E.J. Biggers and Jaylen Watkins. Even that doesn't seem assured. Hopefully the Eagles staff allows him to continue acclimating to one position, rather than try out a return to safety and overload him, much like Marcus Smith in 2014.

Josh Huff, wide receiver

Huff was the trendy pick to take off this year, and he still may. But the preseason hasn't shown us anything. He didn't play against the Packers and has one catch for 12 yards in the preseason. Through no fault of his own (the death of a loved one) Huff's missed a lot of time in practice.

Nelson Agholor has impressed in his absence.

Mark Sanchez, quarterback

It's not that Sanchez has played particularly poorly outside of the preseason opener against the Colts, but that it's been made clear to any remaining holdouts that there is no quarterback competition in Philly. Sam Bradford has been exceptional in his short appearances and has survived live hits so far.

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MLB Power Rankings | by Ryan Hannable

No. 1

Cardinals (85-46)

After it appeared the Cardinals may be struggling a bit last week, they got things back on track in a hurry by winning three straight and eight of their last 10 games to open a five-game lead in the NL Central.

No. 2

Royals (80-50)

Kansas City has by far the best record in the American League and they have continued to stay hot, winning seven of their last 10 games to now lead the AL Central by an astounding 13 games. Lorenzo Cain's 6.2 WAR is tied for third in the AL.

No. 3

Pirates (79-50)

Although the Pirates likely won't win the division, they are a lock for the wild card, as they have won seven of 10 games. All-Star Mark Melancon leads all of baseball with 43 saves. They are tied for the second-best home record in baseball.

No. 4

Cubs (74-56)

Even though the Cubs have cooled off of late, they still hold a firm grip on the second NL wild card spot. Jake Arrieta has been outstanding of late, as his ERA of 2.11 is second in the National League. He also just tossed a no-hitter — no big deal.

No. 5

Blue Jays (74-57)

Toronto has climbed to the top of the AL East standings. Although it's not a surprise, their second-half surge has been something special. Josh Donaldson has driven in 108 runs this year, which are by far the most in the American League.

No. 6

Dodgers (73-57)

The Dodgers lead the NL West by 4.5 games and seem to be getting back to the postseason. Once there the hope will be their pitching is more dependable than in past years. Zack Grienke and Clayton Kershaw have two of the top three ERAs in the NL.

No. 7

Astros (73-59)

Winners of seven of their last 10, the Astros have opened up a four-game lead in the American League West. They have also now gone over the plus-100 run-differential mark at plus-101, which is the second-best in the American League.

No. 8

Mets (73-58)

Even though the Mets dropped two games over the weekend to the Red Sox, overall they have won eight of 10 and lead the NL East by 6.5 games. They continue to be led by their rotation and most notably Jacob deGrom, as his 2.32 ERA is fourth in the NL.

No. 9

Yankees (72-58)

The Yankees and Blue Jays will be one of the best division races this month, as the two go back and forth to see who can take the AL East. New York will need its pitching to rise to the occasion, as that has been its Achilles heel all season.

No. 10

Giants (69-62)

Time is running out for the Giants as they have lost three straight games and with the Cubs and Pirates running away with the wild card, it looks as if their only chance of getting into the playoffs is by winning the division (they trail the Dodgers by 4.5 games).

No. 11

Rangers (68-62)

Winners of seven of their last 10, that has only allowed the Rangers to keep pace in the division and the wild card. It's been a terrific turnaround for the Rangers, as they were one of the worst teams in baseball at the start of the year.

No. 12

Twins (67-63)

The Twins are making a run at the wild card as they have won eight of 10 games to get back in the mix. Closer Glen Perkins' 31 saves are the second-most in the AL. Forget the division though — Minnesota is 12 games behind the Royals.

No. 13

Angels (65-66)

The Angels are falling apart at the worst time as they have lost four straight and eight of 10 games. They appear likely to miss out on the postseason, which would be a shame as Albert Pujols and Mike Trout are having monster seasons.

No. 14

Nationals (66-64)

At 6.5 games back, the Nationals need to go on a huge run during the season's final month if they have any shot at making the postseason. With the pitching staff that they have, they are one of the most disappointing teams in all of baseball.

No. 15

Rays (65-66)

Tampa Bay is, like many teams in the American League, clinging on to hope of a wild-card berth. They will need to go on a winning streak and get some help as the season wraps up. Chris Archer's solid pitching will help, as his 2.78 ERA is fifth in the AL.

No. 16

Indians (64-66)

Cleveland is one of the hottest teams in baseball as they have won six straight and eight of 10, but it might be too little too late as they would have to jump a lot of teams for a wild-card berth. Jason Kipnis is batting .319, third in the American League.

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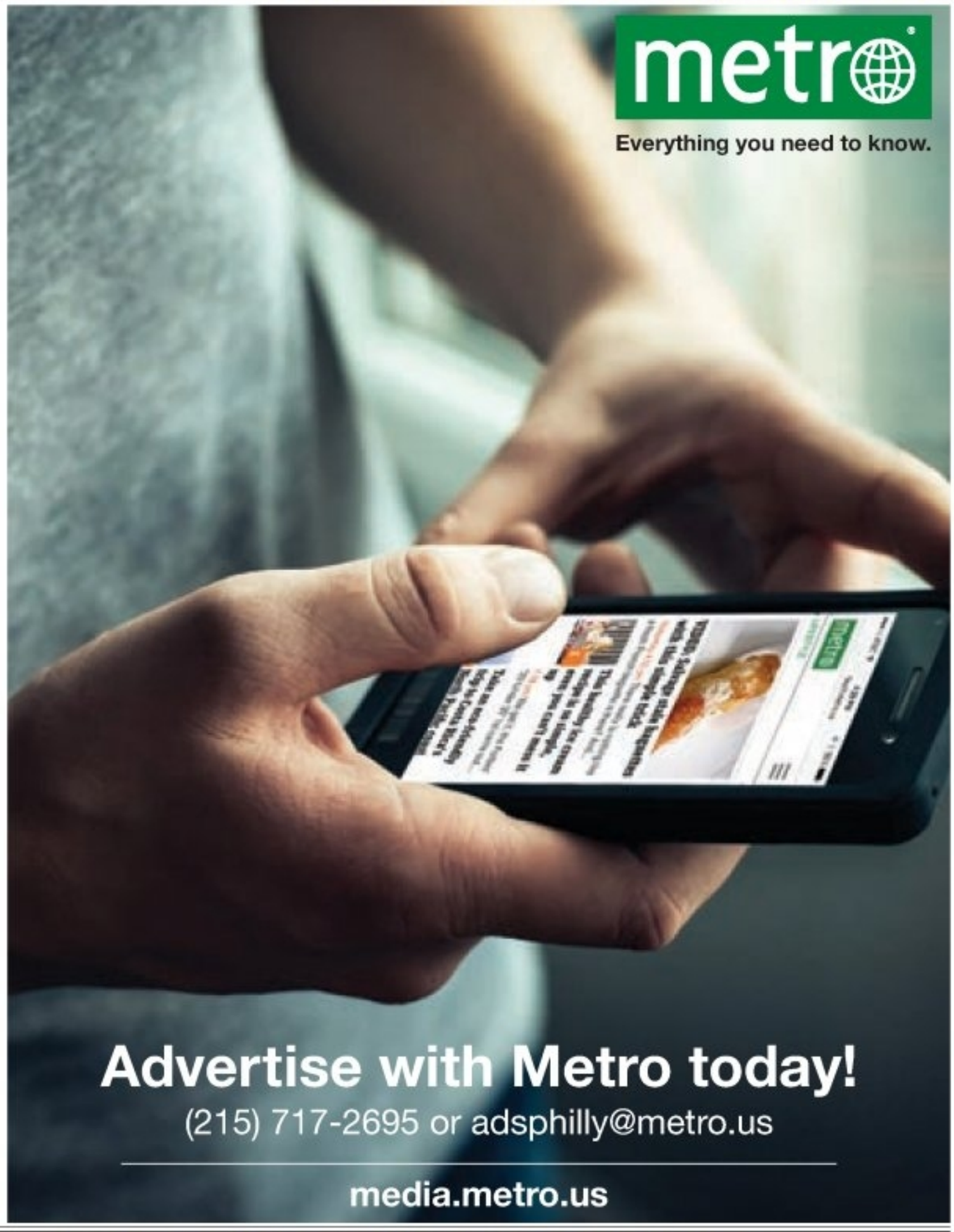

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